

but any economic action which the aggressor might decide to regard as an act of war. The Duce, seizing his opportunity, announced that if oil were added to the list he would fight. The threat sufficed, and the one article vital to his success in a land of mountains and deserts continued to be freely supplied. Among the vendors, it is sad to relate, was the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, in which the British Government held the majority of shares. The postponement of the date of the operation of sanctions till November 18 enabled the aggressor to accumulate large stocks, and some of Italy's timid neighbours declined to co-operate in the boycott.

The half-hearted attempt merely wounded Italy's pride.

Materially she suffered some inconvenience, which might have become serious if the campaign had lasted into a second or third year. Psychologically it was a godsend to the Duce, who now stood forth as the defender of the national dignity against foreign interference. Whether it was worth while incurring the angry, resentment of a Great Power by pin-pricks which offered no real prospect of success may be doubted. "If you are going to adopt a sanction," declared Mr. Baldwin, "you must be prepared for war." England was not prepared for war, and Mussolini knew it. It would have been wiser either to follow the 1931 precedent of inaction on the ground that Abyssinia was not worth a conflict, or to cut off the supply of oil and face the consequences. As it was, we fell between two stools.

If England took the lead in the sanctionist campaign, France was the pioneer of mediation, for Laval cared little for the League and was determined not to break with Mussolini. The suggestion that the two countries should explore the possibilities of peace was made in the Assembly by Van Zeeland, the Belgian Premier, and approved by

both Govern-
ments. Since Abyssinia had no prospect of
defeating her
powerful enemy, the only way to stop the war, it
seemed, was
to yield a portion of her territory. At the end
of October a
Foreign Office expert visited Paris, where a plan
was drawn
up which became the basis of the Hoare-Laval
scheme. The
British Minister at Addis Ababa advised the
Emperor to open
negotiations, and the two Foreign Ministers
appealed for
peace at Geneva on November 2. When at
this point Mr.
Baldwin dissolved Parliament, support of the
League was as
much the declared programme of the
Government as of the
Opposition; but when the victory was won the
confidential
discussions at Paris were resumed.